DENOMINATIONALISM
VS.
CHRISTIAN UNION

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DENOMINATIONALISM
vs.
CHRISTIAN UNION.

W. H. Scott

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VS.

CHRISTIAN UNION

BY

REV. TENNIS S. HAMLIN, D. D.

Pastor of the Church of the Covenant,
Washington, D. C.

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TO

ALL WHO

THROUGH CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTION,

SEEK

TO PROMOTE THE CHRIST LIFE,

THIS LITTLE BOOK

IS

LOVINGLY DEDICATED.

PREFATORY NOTE.

THE five sermons that make up this little book were preached last Spring, in the regular course of pastoral duty, and are here given unchanged. The Christian Endeavor Society of this church thought them worth circulating, and has assumed all responsibility in the matter. To it should also be given all credit, should they, by God's blessing, do anything to advance the great cause of Christian Union.

CHURCH OF THE COVENANT,
Washington, D. C.,
1 Sept., 1891.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

One of the most blessed signs of the present time is that Christian people are drawing together more and more in affectionate fellowship. The philosophy of this fellowship is not always understood, the reasons which bring Christians together are not formulated, but there is, nevertheless, an instinctive feeling in the hearts of Christians, such as was never before known, that the honor of God's Kingdom can be fully promoted only as they come to know each other better and love each other more. Because of this feeling many are asking themselves, why there are so many divisions in Protestantism; whether these divisions are necessary, and what the outcome would be of closer union. These questions will surely be asked more and more frequently in the future, for such move-

ments never go backwards. The hands on the dial of God's providence never revolve the wrong way. Because of this feeling and longing desire in the hearts of millions of Christians, such a volume as this is exceedingly timely and useful. It shows how the difference between the Protestant denominations originated. It indicates wherein they are useful, and wherein they are harmful. It takes a sympathetic and large-minded view of the whole subject. Its mission is not to denounce wise denominational efforts, but to show the folly and littleness of mere sectarianism. It formulates in eloquent language what many have felt, but few have been able to express so clearly; it advocates no radical methods, laughs at no conscientious scruples, and destroys no worthy monument of the ages, either of creed or polity. It is constructive, and not destructive, and, better than all, it shows, how in our land and in our time, through the agen-

cies which God has at work, this blessed unity for which every Christian soul longs may come about, and the prayer of our Lord may be answered: "That they may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee.

F. E. CLARK.

BOSTON, Sept. 16, 1891.

DENOMINATIONALISM,

Its Origin and History.

I.

> "Now, I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment."—1 Cor., i. 10.

The current census reveals the fact that there are one hundred and forty denominations of Christians in the United States, not to mention various independent congregations. Who believes that this is right? Who believes that the Lord wants it so? Who believes that the cause of religion is advanced—is not rather immeasurably impeded—by such a state of things? Why, then, does it continue? and how has it come to exist? I want to speak of Christian Union, but these

preliminary inquiries are necessary to clear the way.

The seeds of divisions in religion, as in other matters, exist in human nature. Given favorable conditions, and schisms arise by spontaneous generation. Men *think* differently; hence they divide in doctrine. They *feel* differently; hence they divide in worship. They are ambitious, jealous, self-seeking; hence they desire to exercise leadership, and will do it even at the cost of discord. They love the great cause of Christ sincerely, but not profoundly enough to forego opinion and taste and office for its sake.

We see this even during Christ's earthly ministry. When he said that eternal life is possible only in such union with him as is implied in the digestion and assimilation of food, many of his disciples said: "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" and they "went back, and walked no more with him."[1] The ten were indignant

[1] John, vi. 60 and 66.

at James and John when they presumed on the favor that Jesus had shown them to ask the two chief places in the expected kingdom.[1] At the last supper, under the very shadow of the cross, they all contended for precedence.[2] Such things the Master suppressed by his personal influence. Bickering and ambition yielded to their love for him. And they were so chastened by his death, as well as so exalted by the effusion of the Holy Spirit, that for some time complete harmony prevailed. The first council, in the year 50, was entirely peaceful, and James presided, apparently, by general consent. But, within two years, Paul and Peter had serious trouble about circumcision,[3] and Paul and Barnabas had such a "sharp contention" about Mark, that they could no longer labor together.[4]

[1] Matt., xx. 20–29.

[2] Luke, xxii. 24–30.

[3] Gal., ii. 11.

[4] Acts, xv. 36–41.

Five years later, A. D. 57, Paul wrote his first lettter to the Corinthian Christians. As soon as he gives the customary salutation, and commends them for their intelligence, their generosity, and their testimony to Christ, he goes at once to the subject most upon his heart, their lamentable dissensions and divisions. The Church has been in existence only some three years, and already there were four parties in it, naming themselves after Paul, Apollos, Peter and Christ. Here, at the very beginning of Christianity, we have the fruitful cause of divisions in the Church, viz., adhesion to human leaders to the extent of putting their names in place of the name of Jesus. This, the apostle unqualifiedly condemns. With beautiful delicacy he says nothing of his fellow-laborers, but sharply asks: "Is Christ divided? Is he the Savior of only a part of the Church! Or, if you each claim him, do you take him as only your partial, instead of your sole and

complete leader? Do you put me on a level with him, or even above him? Was Paul crucified for you? or were you baptized into the name of Paul? What right, then, have you to call yourselves Paulists, when the only name that can express your indebtedness to the Savior, and your union with him, is *Christians?*"

A careful reading of this letter will show you that, under various aspects, this is its primary theme; a secondary one being the danger of falling back into the licentious practices of their Greek heathenism. The second letter, written a year or so later, declares that his reproofs had been effectual. He did not regret that his first letter had made them sorry, for they had sorrowed after a Godly sort, and had repented, and had purged themselves of the sin of schism.[1]

But the same sin found a place in all the Apostolic churches. Every Epistle abounds with warnings against false

[1] II Cor. vii. 8–12.

teachers, who tend to lead them away from their unity in Christ. There are Judaizers that preach a reactionary Gospel, and insist that all must enter the new economy through the old. There are legalists that subordinate the Gospel to the law. There are those that join the Saducees in denying the resurrection, and those that out-Pharisee the Pharisees, declaring that the resurrection is past already, and thus overthrow the faith of some. Each of these theorists finds people to espouse his theory, and to call themselves by his name. No Church escapes their disintegrating power. That at Philippi was probably the purest and most spiritual that Paul founded, yet he had to appeal to them most solemnly, in the name of Christ and of the spirit, not to do anything through strife or vainglory ;[1] to avoid murmurings and disputings ;[2] he even beseeches two of their good women, by name, to be of the same mind in the Lord, and entreats

[1] Phil., ii. 1–3. [2] Phil. ii. 14.

his true yoke-fellow — probably the pastor — to help them not to quarrel![3]

The general epistles have the same tenor. James cries out against the divisive power of the tongue. Peter urges submission to authority in Church as well as in State. John pleads for brotherly love with his unique and exquisite tenderness. All feel the perils and fear the disastrous effects of dissension, and raise a common voice of warning against it, of entreaty to Christ's people to be at peace among themselves,[4] to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.[5]

Time will not permit me to trace in detail the divisions that arose subsequently to the Apostolic period. The great rupture between the East and the West — between Greek and Latin Christianity — is the most noteworthy. Theologically, the occasion of it was most inadequate; indeed, was ludic-

[3] Phil. iv., 2 and 3.

[4] 1 Th., v. 13.

[5] Eph. iv. 3.

rously infinitesimal; the addition of a single word to the Nicene Creed, declaring that the Spirit proceeds from the Son as well as from the Father, a matter about which the Scripture nowhere authorizes us to speak dogmatically. But the separation was more political than theological. Rome and Constantinople were jealous of each other. Each wished to be supreme. Each preferred supremacy over a part of Christendom to a secondary place within the whole. Hence, the schism that remains unhealed to this hour.

Then came the Protestant Reformation. Historians differ as to its causes and its essence; but these two elements at least were in it, a revival of piety, and an assertion of the right of private judgment. Christendom was released from the tyranny of the priesthood, which, from its central authority at Rome, had been able to enforce an external uniformity. State Churches were an immediate consequence. Separation of Church and State followed.

As freedom increased, a disintegrating tendency developed. *Only* developed; not, was created; for it had long existed, but had been suppressed. The Bible in every man's hands meant that every man would have his own opinion of what the Bible teaches. Liberty of worship meant the exercise of all diverse tastes as to the form and mode of worship. Authorities in both Church and State took alarm, and attempted to suppress dissent and to compel uniformity. It was all in vain. The Inquisition in Spain and Italy, and the Court of High Commission and the Star Chamber in England, were alike ineffectual. They only fixed the determination of the people to maintain their freedom.

We must cross the Atlantic with the Pilgrims and come to our own country, in which we are chiefly interested. Religious freedom was the "favoring gale" that brought them to these shores. Yet they had not fully learned their lesson. They wanted to GET

this priceless boon rather than to GIVE it. Persecution stains all too many pages of our early history. Church and State were still united, to the vast injury of each. Gradually came their complete separation as one of the corner-stones of the new republic. At last the nation had grown to its full stature in liberty, and every man was, for the first time, free to believe and worship as he pleased. Each person might have a church of his own, if he would pay for it, and would not trespass upon his neighbor's rights in maintaining it. This freedom was more than legal, it was moral. No man's chances in business, or standing in society, were either increased or diminished by his religious affiliations. In England to this day people are surprised to find anybody of culture and refinement outside the Establishment. This is true wherever a State Church exists, no matter how full may be the toleration of dissent. Complete religious liberty was first realized in

this republic; and is realized only here at this hour.

This liberty has existed one hundred years, since the adoption of the first amendment to the national constitution, forbidding the Congress to pass any law for the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. In those one hundred years we have developed one hundred and forty sects. This certainly sounds ominous. It looks like an impeachment of religious liberty. It almost makes one sigh for a State Church, for laws of conformity, for a new Star Chamber! But here sentiment speaks, not reason. It is too late to go back to faggots and the rack. St. Bartholomew's Day is forever past. Henceforth men must be Christians freely, or not at all. One hundred and forty sects in one country is a better state of things than the Inquisition.

But it is a *very bad state of things*. We cannot deny that, and we must not try to conceal it, either from ourselves or others. We may note

the causes of it, however, and should do so. The unheard-of stream of immigration has brought to us, along with many of the noblest elements in our population, many elements of unrest and discord. A good share of our one hundred and forty sects are not indigenous, but transplanted. Men come here in the rebound from the old world oppression to assert an *extreme* liberty. They assert it for its own sake, when nothing is to be gained by it exceptthe consciousness that they are free. Like an animal released from captivity, they use their freedom wantonly. We feel this in politics quite as much as in religion. There is a constant ferment throughout our whole social fabric. The only safety in fermentation is to give vent. We do this politically through free speech; socially, through free access to wealth and preferment; religiously, through the opportunity of every man to choose his own type of religion, or create a new type, if he pleases. Thus freedom fost-

ers denominationalism. More still, *for a time* it actually produces it. In the final result, as I hope to show later, it is the only soil and the only atmosphere for Christian union. But up to a certain point, which I believe we have about reached in America, it means that men will feel they are not having the freedom to which they are entitled, unless in everything they are differing from everybody else, and in some way organizing and perpetuating their differences.

Dr. William Adams, at the first meeting of the Alliance of Reformed Churches, in Edinburgh, said: "I have been looking about among your Churches and I find E. P's, U. P's, R. P's, and, in fact, you seem to be just a lot of split peas."

And, so, many of our great denominations are divided and subdivided. We have to-day the Presbyterian Church North and South, the Cumberland Presbyterian, the United Presbyterian, the Reformed Presbyterian

in two branches, the Associate Reformed, the Reformed Churches in America, and several others. All these hold the same, or substantially the same, doctrines, and have practically the same government and forms of worship. They have divided along political lines; they have followed leaders that would rather be first among few, than fifth or tenth among many. They have been cut off because of methods used in revivals, or have gone off because they would not vote to hold office under a constitution that does not contain the name of God. There must be a sect that will sing only the Psalms of David, and a sect that will sing hymns, but not with organ accompaniment. The great things in which all Presbyterians agree are overshadowed by the little things in which some of them differ.

So when we speak of Methodism, we usually think of the Methodist Episcopal Church, that great, aggressive and honored denomination of

Christians. But there are also Wesleyan Methodists, Primitive Methodists, Protestant Methodists, Calvinistic Methodists, Bible Christians, and I know not how many more.

The Baptists are distinguished, as the name implies, by a certain view of the sacrament of baptism. But though they hold this as against all other Christians, it has not proved strong enough to keep them united. There are Open-Communion Baptists and Close-Communion; Seventh-Day Baptists, General-Six-Principle Baptists, Campbellites, and other lesser sects.

These divisions have been mostly on lines of doctrine or worship. They are bad enough, in all conscience; though we feel sincere respect for men that give up all the sacred and tender associations of inherited faith in deference to what they sincerely believe to be duty. Otherwise we would condemn the Wesleyan movement in the eighteenth century, which meant a revival of spiritual religion; the Puritan

movement in the seventeenth century, which meant civil and religious liberty ; even the Reformation in the sixteenth century, which meant the resurrection and perpetuation of Christianity itself. But the multitude of men that have gone out from the great Protestant Churches, and given their names to little movements, have not been reformers. They have not been compelled to act by a divine fire in their bones that would not be quenched. Instead, they have been urged on by ambition ; incited by pique or jealousy; held to their course by simple obstinacy. And the Churches themselves have not been free from blame. Macauley has shown us how unwise Protestantism has been in crowding out men with some special zeal, and fairly forcing them to make a schism, instead of setting them at work within the Church.[1] A freer spirit in the Churches would have saved us from who can say how many of our one hundred and forty sects.

[1] See his review of Ranke's History of the Popes.

Now this tendency to name a denomination, or a school of theology, or a mode of worship, after some man, comes perilously near what Paul condemned in the Corinthian Christians, if indeed it is not the very thing. The reformers naturally called themselves after the man who was the very incarnation of the Reformation; without whom, so far as we can see, it could not have come to pass. We instinctively make for ourselves a descriptive adjective from the name of the great theologian of Geneva, who so largely shaped the doctrine of his own and of subsequent times. "Lutheran" and "Calvinistic" are convenient and useful words. And so long as they are kept in their proper, subordinate place, they do no harm. But the moment they come into competition with the word "Christian," they begin to be divisive and pernicious. And the painful thing is, that they do come into such competition in spite of us. And so do adjectives that are not per-

sonal. "Presbyterian," "Episcopalian," "Methodist," "Baptist"; how many of us tell the whole story of our religion when we call ourselves by these names! They not only fail to bring us straight and close to Christ, but they distinctly separate us from our brethren. To thus designate types of thought and modes of worship and forms of government, is quite legitimate, but to have them on our banners and on our hearts beside the name that is above every name, is enough to make the world cry in alarm and shame: "Is Christ divided? Was Luther crucified for you? or were you baptized into the name of Calvin?"

Set all this, beloved, over against the fervent appeal of the text: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." "All speak the same thing!" Why,

our common name, "Christian," is hardly heard in the jangling discord of the human names by which we proudly call ourselves. "Perfectly joined together!" Why, we are broken into one hunndred and forty fragments, with endless jealousies, suspicions, recriminations, antagonisms. "In the same mind and in the same judgment!" Only, it is to be feared, as each sect is minding its own things, and each judging all others uncharitably. "A pitiful state of things!" do you say? Alas, yes. But have I overdrawn it? Will it ever be cured by blinking it? Shall we not face the facts, take our share of the blame, and solemnly ask, what can we do toward bringing in a better day?

Denominationalism.

its results.

II.

"If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.—Gal., v. 15.

LAST Sunday morning I spoke of the fact of denominationalism, and very hastily sketched its origin and history. I purpose now to speak of its results.

At the close of the service one week ago a very intelligent and thoughtful gentleman said to me, "I do not at all agree with you. There are not half denominations enough. What good has the union of the Old and New school Presbyterians ever done? It has only made a great many people profess to believe a great many things that they do not believe." In other words, my friend would have more denominations in the interest of the largest freedom of belief.

Well, if that is the purpose for which denominations exist, there are *not* enough. If the purpose is to be fully realized, sects must be counted, not by the hundreds, but by the thousands. There must be almost as many as there are individual Christians. Can you pick out a score of men and women in all this congregation that believe just alike about all the details of Christian revelation and doctrine? Can you pick out a dozen, or a half dozen, or even two? All of us no doubt agree substantially on the few great essentials of faith; but the moment we go on to interpretations of obscure passages of Scripture; to philosophies of religion; to metaphysical distinctions and hair-splitting definitions, we fly apart. Now, if sects are to exist along these lines, and if we are to have enough sects so that each man can say, "My denomination represents exactly what I believe in all particulars," it is obvious that our present one hundred and

forty must be multiplied by many thousands!

But this is not at all essential to the widest freedom of belief. No Church exacts from its private members assent to any detailed creed, but only a credible confession of faith in Jesus Christ. No sect requires even its officers to accept its symbols "ipsisimis verbis;" or to take any person's interpretation of them; or to forego in any way the full right of private judgment. If our one hundred and forty sects were reduced to forty, or twenty, or ten, or five, all loyal disciples of Christ might still be within them, and still feel as free as they do to-day. The full and practical recognition of this would be a long step toward Christian union, as I shall indicate more fully bye-and-bye.

But it is claimed that the various sects create a healthful competition in religion, and "provoke one another," if not exactly "to love," certainly to "good works."[1] Men say

[1] Heb., x. 24.

more is done for church extension along Presbyterian lines by the ten or twelve denominations of Presbyterians than could be done if they were all united. "Competition is the life of trade," and so is it of religious work.

Well, granting for the sake of argument, that competition increases activity, is it a right Christian motive? Can we expect God's blessing on work done with no higher purpose than to outstrip some rival? Who of us has not seen this tried, and seen it fail? The feeblest efforts undertaken for pure love of Christ and of man will accomplish more than the mightiest that have behind them only the ambition of some person or some sect.

But it is said again: Unity is not uniformity. We may be substantially one without being organically one. Our faith is the same as to essentials; our worship is one in spirit, differing only in form; we all love one Master, we all sympathize with the lost and the wretched; we are all laboring and

giving to spread the same Gospel; in fact, we are practically united now, though called by diverse names; why not "let well enough alone?" Why strive after any more Christian union than already exists in this common bond of loyalty and service? The answer is to be found in the vast and appalling evils of sectarianism that surround us on every side.

The first of these evils to be noticed is *waste* of money and of men. We are everywhere, in Christian lands, overlapping each other; and the truer the claim that we are substantially one the more inexcusable the waste of two Churches where one is sufficient. It has recently been stated on very high authority that at least sixty of the two hundred and fifty evangelical churches of Boston might be closed and still abundant room be left for all attendants; that of the sixteen hundred such churches in Massachusetts, many, half filled, or less, are within fifteen minutes' walk of each

other; that if ordinary business economy were exercised, at least $178,000 would be saved each year in that small state alone. On the same basis, it is estimated that in the country at large there are 25,000 churches more than are required, in which $12,500,000 lie unproductive.[1] This, when every mission board is crippled for lack of money, and the whole pagan world is waiting for the Gospel.

For this means waste of men as well as of money. An army of two or three thousand men are holding these posts, most of them hardly half-fed or half-clothed, discouraged over the fruitlessness of their efforts, while on foreign soil they might be proclaiming Christ to multitudes.

It is easy to say: "Let these men go to work and fill up the churches where they are." In many of the city churches that would no doubt be a remedy. Better administration, more energy on the minister's part, and

[1] "Christian at Work," 12 Feb., '91. Editorial.

more co-operation with him on the part of the people, would, to use a manufacturer's phrase, make the output better correspond with the value of the plant and the cost of running it. But most of this waste is in villages and small towns, where the churches cannot be filled simply for lack of people to fill them. One of our suburbs, with a population of thirteen hundred has eight protestant evangelical churches. Suppose that every man, woman, and child there were a church attendant; suppose the color-line were rigidly drawn; still, but for sectarian divisions, two churches, or at the utmost three, would be ample, and from sixty to seventy-five per cent of present expenditure would be saved, while five or six ministers would be released to go where they are sadly needed.

Nor is this an extreme case. It is in an old town, with a stationary population. But the same thing is going on in the newer parts of our country. The discovery of a mine, the laying

out of a railroad, the opening of an Indian reservation, starts a village. Instantly the representatives of half a dozen denominations are on the ground to lay the foundations of as many Churches. Not primarily and above all else to give the people the Gospel, but to get "our Church" established; not to take possession in the name of Christ, but in the name of Presbyterianism, or Congregationalism, or Methodism. Hence half a dozen feeble, struggling congregations, frantically appealing to the Boards for aid, and half a dozen starving ministers. In many such cases the subsequent growth of the town justifies this temporary suffering and waste. Population rapidly increases, is permanent, and all the Churches are needed. But in many other cases the mine proves a failure; the railroad terminus is moved further on; the soil is found unproductive, and the half-dozen Churches are stranded. What then? Do three or four or five withdraw, and leave the

work to the first-comer, or to the one best qualified to do it? Not at all. Denominational loyalty, or what is thought to be such, is stronger than love for the great cause of Christ. Each holds on in hope of freezing out the others, and the waste of money and men continues indefinitely.

But there is a worse waste still, namely, a waste of *efficiency*. People say: "Yes, it does seem a pity to have so many competing Churches, but there is one compensation — it adds to their total efficiency." No mistake could be greater. It immeasurably subtracts from their total efficiency. It costs them, first of all, their proper dignity as Churches. Their business is to seek and to save the lost; to go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in; instead, they are angling for money and respectability and social influence. The moment a new family moves into the town, each Church is on the alert to secure it; the new-comers must be ex-

cellent Christians indeed if they are not sadly demoralized to find themselves so eagerly sought for. The question is not, "Do these people need the Gospel, and can we give it to them?" but, "Can we get them in with us to balance that new family that the Baptists got last week?" What could be more unworthy of a Church of Jesus Christ? Yet it is driven to this extremity by the instinct of self-preservation, that first law of nature.

So in our foreign mission work. Sectarianism is an incalculable obstacle. There are twelve Protestant denominations at work in Italy. They say to the people: "The Romish Church is corrupt; you must leave it, and come over to Protestantism." "But what," they ask, "is Protestantism? Is it Episcopacy, or Methodism, or Presbyterianism? If Episcopacy, is it High Church, or Low Church, or Broad Church? If Presbyterianism, is it Scotch, or English, or American?" Such questions are not asked sarcas-

tically, though they might well be, but in good faith. And the puzzle is increased when individuals start independent missions of their own, and Protestantism is represented to the Italians, or the French, or the Spaniards, by this, that, or the other man.

Our Church has been occupying certain fields in Persia since ever the Gospel entered that land under the modern missionary movement. We have planted schools, and trained up a generation of young people. Recently some High Church Episcopalians from England have gone there, told the people that we had not been giving them genuine Christianity, and have stolen away not a few of our young men who were just ready to enter upon the work of the ministry. They have even followed those that have come to this country for education; and clergymen in New York City have not held themselves aloof from this proselyting work.

For many years our Mission in

Beirut has had a flourishing union Church. All denominations have lived and worked together with the greatest harmony. A few months ago the Bishop comes from Jerusalem, calls upon all his sectaries to withdraw, and starts a little Church of his own order.

Do not imagine that I am trying to fix this upon one denomination, as though it belonged to it exclusively or pre-eminently. We are all sinners in this matter. Right here at home our own Church is going into New England, an evangelized region certainly, if there is any such on the face of the globe, and is using Home Mission money to plant Presbyterian Churches in the midst of Congregationalism. The plea is that Scotch and Scotch-Irish people are coming from the British provinces into the manufacturing towns of New England, who do not feel at home in the Congregational Churches. But they can get the Gospel there; can rear their children in good Sunday schools; can

all lead Christian lives. In short, it is a question of simple preference. Well, if people are able to pay for their preferences, no doubt they have a right to indulge them; though in this case I do not believe that even the exercise of this right ought to be encouraged. But certainly they should not ask us to pay for them. We are glad to give everybody the Gospel, but we doubt the propriety of their criticizing the shape of the salver on which it is handed to them.

But the Church of Christ is more than an evangelizing agency. It is an institution. In addition to giving men the Gospel, it must train them in holy living, keep up the standard of morals, conserve the peace and good order of society, and in general prove itself the salt of the earth.[1] Does sectarianism add to efficiency here? By no means. See how the machinery of education and philanthropy is multiplied, each plant with its staff of men and its

[1] Matt., v. 13.

cost of administration. Consolidation would mean an economy that would fill every treasury. And the gain of moral power would be even greater than the gain of financial. If our one hundred and forty denominations were one, it would wield a thousand times the force over individual minds and hearts, in society, and in the state, that one hundred and forty are wielding to-day.

In addition to all this waste, which may be called a negative evil, there is the positive evil of much unkind and unchristian feeling. See what a quarrel in a single congregation does. What bitterness, what hard words, what alienations, what sores that are never healed. We are often asked why Church troubles are so cruel and so hard to cure. Just because they arise about matters that lie so near our hearts. We may disagree about indifferent things, and never give it a second thought. But to break with another on a vital question means the sundering of the strongest ties. Now

we are wont to think that we are not bigoted, to flatter ourselves for our liberality and breadth of view, but as a matter of fact we feel differently toward Christians of our own name than toward equally godly people of any other name. We feel our own to be sounder in faith, purer in worship, nearer to Christ. "Sandy," said a gentleman to a hard-headed Scotchman, "I don't believe you think there are any real Christians except yourself and your sister Maggie." "Weel," said Sandy, "you're aboot right, and I e'en hae my doobts aboot Moggie." None of us would be willing to avow it, yet when we look fairly into our hearts, how our sectarianism has narrowed and shriveled us!

And how it retards our growth in grace. Paul tells the Corinthians that he had been unable to give them the best truth of the Gospel; he had to treat them as babes, and feed them with milk, not with strong meat; they were still carnal, worldly; still walking after

the flesh, and not after the Spirit. And the sole reason is that they were divided, one saying, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," thus putting the servants above the common Master of them all.[1] These party contentions and ambitions diverted their thoughts from Christ, and disqualified them from following Him with undivided powers.

So he urges the Ephesians to walk worthy of the vocation with which they are called, and assures them that they can do it only as they keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.[2] He writes in the same tenor in every Epistle. He holds out no hope to any of becoming full-grown disciples unless they avoid the weakening distractions of party loyalty, and give themselves wholly to the service of Christ.

And this is precisely in line with the Lord's own teaching. We have

[1] 1 Cor. iii. 1–7.

[2] Eph. iv. 1–3.

only to remember how exacting he is in requiring undivided love to realize that we cannot reach his standard while our best service is given, not to his great cause, but to any sect, however large and respectable. If we are Presbyterians first and Christians second, we may be excellent Presbyterians, but we will be mediocre Christians.

Such are some of the results of our sectarian divisions, a dwarfing of our personal Christian life; a chilling of that mutual love which is the bond of perfectness, a great loss of moral efficiency, and a vast waste of those resources that we hold as stewards, and that should and might be giving the Gospel to every creature. I know that apologies can be offered for denominationalism and many plausible things said in its defense. But can they for one moment offset these undeniable evils? Is it not still true, even in these blessed days of absence of persecution and full religious freedom, that under

the spur of party spirit Christians "bite and devour one another?" Is it not still true that we are "consumed one of another," if not in our bodies, yet in our resources and in our influence? Business men talk about "ruinous competition;" where is it more ruinous than in religion? Merchants and manufacturers tell us that the only road to prosperity is rigid economy; but sectarianism is wasting men by the thousands and money by the millions. We all know that influence over our fellow-men for their good is a thing that must be sedulously sought and jealously preserved; yet we are recklessly throwing away our influence over the world by divisions and strifes among ourselves. How must HE feel —our ascended Savior—whose last prayer was a mighty cry that his people might be one, in order that the world might recognize and receive him as the divine Redeemer!

The Nature and Need of Christian Union.

III.

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also that shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me."—John, xvii. 20-23.

The waste of money, of men, and of efficiency, that flows from denominationalism is itself an unanswerable argument for Christian union. The ill-feeling that seems inseparable from it, amounting in many cases to bitterness and bigotry, strongly affirms the argument. If, now, it can be shown that fullness and maturity and the largest fruitfulnes of spritual character are not possible under sectarianism,

the argument will be unassailable, and ought to be irresistible.

The last point I had time only to mention a week ago. We will now examine it more closely in the light of the New Testament.

We must look not so much at single texts as at whole chapters and epistles, and at the general scope of Apostolic teaching.[1]

Take, for example, the letter to the Romans, which we regard as pre-eminently doctrinal. Its key-note is this: "The Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."[2] On this is built up the whole harmony of redemption. It is a redemption *from* sin *unto* holiness. In the first eleven chapters this is argued, expounded, explained; constantly traced back and up to Christ; its logic more and more kindling with the fire of love, until it blazes in the

[1] This can be appreciated only by reading the Epistles through, and with this in mind.

[2] i. 16.

final benediction, "Of Him and through Him, and to Him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever and ever, amen." Then the Apostle addresses himself to the application of his argument in holy living, and at once comes to this, that we, though "many, are one body in Christ."[1] Then the remainder of the epistle is occupied in showing how we may realize the oneness. There are varying gifts in the Church, but they are all to be exercised without jealousy. In civil life there is to be due respect for those in authority, and prompt obedience. In social relations the strong are to help the weak, and not to think solely of pleasing themselves. Thus, there will be neither social animosities, nor civil strife, nor religious schism. The idea of the *body* will be realized, where each part has its own function, and where no part works against any other. The hands execute what the head devises,

[1] xii. 5.

and the head devises what the heart prompts; so that there is everywhere co-operation and no rivalry. Now, mark, this is not for the body as a whole only, but for each member. Paul, in this Epistle, is not discussing the Church nor talking of any corporate salvation. He is applying the doctrines of redemption to individual believers, and it is for their sake, not for the glory of some great corporation to which they belong, that they are to live at peace among themselves. Only thus can they realize the fullness of their salvation.

He uses and expands the same illustration in writing to the Corinthians.[1] In order to have a *body* there must be various members. "If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?"[2] But he is very careful to add that there must be no schism in the body. The hand must not

[1] I. xii. 20-27.

[2] xii. 17.

consider the foot useless, nor claim that because it cannot grasp, but only walk, it is therefore no part of the body. Such is the unity that the least member can not suffer alone; every nerve feels the thrill of pain; nor the least member be invigorated without the whole body showing the renewed vitality. The hand might pluck out the eye, but in so doing it would half destroy its own usefulness. The left hand might tear down what the right hand builds up; the right foot insist on going backward while the left insists on going forward; the hearing contradict what the sight asserts, and the brain refuse to believe what the heart pronounces true; but such schism would not only destroy the body, it would destroy all the members as well. The body is greatly injured by loss of hands, or feet, or eyes; but those members *perish* when separated from the body. "No schism" is most desirable for the body, but it is simply *essential* for the mem-

bers. And so Christians, who are the body of Christ, are not to be envious of each other's gifts, nor jealous because one accomplishes what another can not accomplish. The way of concord is for each to "covet earnestly the best gifts;" but a better way still is for each to love all the rest.

And this introduces us to Paul's marvelous rhapsody on love. We all understand that love is a personal, not a corporate thing.[1] One Church cannot love another; only the Christians in this can love the Christians in that. We all understand when we read this thirteenth chapter that the Apostle is telling what love does for the individual. But tracing the connection, we find that it is Paul's "better way" of avoiding schism in the Church. The personal Christian life can ripen only in this sunshine of love; and thus ripening, it assures the unity of the body of Christ. Love is the highest fruition of character; that fruition secur-

[1] "Corporations," in this sense at least, "have no souls."

ing unity, and unity making possible the fullest attainments of Divine grace for both the Christian and the Church.

The Ephesians Paul exhorts "to walk worthy of the vocation with which they are called," i. e., to be Christians whose lives will correspond with their confessions, and reflect honor upon Him who called them into his service. In order to do this, he says they must cultivate the graces of humility, meekness, patience, forbearance, thus keeping "the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace."[1] It is just that they may do this that the ascended Christ has bestowed on his Church such rich and varied gifts. Its whole equipment of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors; their entire ministry, are for perfecting the saints and edifying the body of Christ. As yet they are children, unsettled in the truth and easily led astray. But they are to come into unity of faith and knowledge, and *thus* to perfect man-

[1] iv. 1-3.

hood, even "to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Full likeness to the Savior, which is the end of all Christian living, cannot be realized in a schismatic Church. The believer is essentially a member in a body, a constituent part in a household,[1] a stone in a building[2], a branch in a vine[3], to whose completion, integrity, existence even, union with others is essential. Isolation is as much an anomaly for the Christian as a single blade of grass in a field, a single apple on a tree. Perfection of the individual fruit requires abundance of fruit. The vine that cannot bear many grapes cannot mature a single grape. Stones, grains of sand, may be isolated, but fruitful soil has coherence; things of *life* grow and cling together. The higher the organism the greater the interdependence; the more absolute the impossibility of the units maturing

[1] Gal. vi. 10.

[2] 1 Pet. ii. 5.

[3] John, xv. 5.

without unity. The greatest brain God ever made would become idiotic in protracted solitary confinement. The noblest achievements of the human mind have been the results of concurrent mental processes. Not only is this essential to the total, but to every unit that makes up the total. Christ is to secure at last "a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, holy and without blemish," [1] and this is the direct result of that unity in which each believer shall reach the measure of the stature of his Lord.

To his own words let us now turn, even from those of his chief Apostle. They are unusually solemn and momentous words. They are a prayer. They are practically his last prayer, offered just as he is about to lay down his life in sacrifice for the world. He is looking forward along the ages, and thinking of us. He is anticipating the effect of his atoning death, and contemplating how he "shall see of the

[1] Eph. v, 27.

travail of his soul, and be satisfied."[1] Such a prayer "could be uttered only by Christ, and even by Christ only once in the world's history."[2] We must feel the force of the circumstances before we attempt to understand and interpret the words.

Now the burden of this prayer is that his people may be kept in unity. Four times he repeats this petition. The two greatest issues of the world he hangs upon its being answered — his people's perfection in the spiritual life, and the world's acceptance of Him as its divine Redeemer. Whoever studies this prayer must reach at least these two conclusions — first, that the best that the Gospel is capable of doing for man cannot be realized unless Christ's Church is one; and, second, that the world's evangelization is impossible to any other than a unified Church.

If, then, we believe these things,

[1] Isa. liii. 11.

[2] Schaff, in Lange on John, p. 512.

and are sincere disciples of Christ, we will be most anxious to know what is this unity for which Christ so earnestly prayed, and upon which he hung such momentous consequences.

Various ideas have been, and are, entertained about it, ranging all the way from the hierarchical scheme of an enforced uniformity to the sentimentalism that is content with some vague expression of mutual respect. If those of the former class are quite unattainable, those of the latter are equally unsatisfactory. And the tendency has been toward the latter. Seeing the difficulties in the way of union; feeling how much self-denial and self-abnegation it calls for; how squarely it stands across the path of personal ambition and the gratification of individual tastes, men have been ready to reduce the meaning in Christ's prayer to a minimum.

Is this prayer answered in the present state of the Church? Persecutions have ceased. The bitterness of secta-

rian animosity has been greatly modified. Freedom of belief and of worship generally prevails. Mutual respect exists among Christians of all names. We say pleasant things about each other in public, and have some small and half-worked plans of comity in our home and foreign mission fields. Now, is this enough? Is it practically all that our Lord prayed for and expected? With these things gained, are our one hundred and forty sects in the United States "one" as far as our Lord desires, and therefore as far as it is our duty to try to compass?

Christ has himself given us the standard of Christian union: "As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." That is, believers are to be one as the Father and the Son are one. And how is that? Why, in the fullest sense, this side the point of merging, and so losing, personality. In Christ dwelt all the fullness of the godhead

bodily."[1] He was able to say: "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father."[2] He constantly protested that he neither spake nor acted of himself, but as the Father prompted; that his will perfectly coincided with his Father's will. Indeed, so strenuously does Christ insist upon this identity that it is not easy for us to keep the distinct personalities of the Deity in our thought. And, practically, we do not do it. We pray indifferently to the Father or the Son or the Spirit, or to the three in one. Theologically we distinguish between their offices in salvation, but in daily religion we do not. Under conviction of sin we cry to *God* for pardon. In pain, fear, anguish, we call on *God* for relief, safety, comfort. Nothing could more chill the fervor of piety in times of dire need than the effort to distinguish between the persons of the Godhead, and to pray to one for this thing, and

[1] Col. ii. 9.

[2] John, xiv. 9.

to another for that. And here speaks our deep conviction that there is no schism in the Deity; that Christ has neither come reluctantly on his Father's errand of salvation, nor by his coming made the reluctant Father willing to save. They are one in this great purpose for whose accomplishment all the resources of the universe are brought into requisition. We cannot conceive of any jealousy between them; of their working against each other in any way; of their wasting the power that might save an immortal man by wrangling over the question which man should be saved, or just how, or where, or when, he should be saved. One in the purpose to save, they are just as much one *in the execution of the purpose.*

Here is the point of practical instruction for us, beloved. That Christians have a common purpose is unquestionable. All desire the glory of Christ in their own sanctification, and in the evangelization of the world.

Whoever fails here is not a Christian, by the very definition of terms. But the moment we enter upon the execution of the purpose, we fly apart. Individual preferences, party ambitions, sectarian rivalries, are allowed to outweigh the one purpose. Hence, one hundred and forty denominations, all professing the same desire, yet crowding and jostling each other, too often ill-naturedly; competing for this or that work with ruinous prodgality, while the world still lieth in the wicked one. Is this the unity for which Christ prayed? Is this the way in which he and the Father are one? A sufficient answer is to look at the result. When *His* unity comes, it will be *evident.* The world will recognize it, and be convinced by it of the genuineness of Christianity. Is that the case to-day? Alas! far from it. The world recognizes our divisions clearly enough, and understands what they mean, I fear, quite as well as we do. But, in order to make it appear that

there is any union, we have to explain somehow the multiplicity of our sects. We say, "They are the results of various types of mind applied to the great problems of theology, or of various tastes in worship, or of great historic movements in races and nations." This sounds large and plausible. We say, "There is internal unity; it is obscured by these divisions, and you do not see it, but you must take our word that it exists." The world shakes its head, and replies, "Your Master said that we should recognize it, and be convinced by it, but the unity you claim meets neither of these tests." Beloved, let us frankly confess that the world is right, and that we are something less than ingenuous in our plea. There were people in St. James' day that insisted that they had Christian faith, though they had no corresponding works to manifest it. He told them plainly that they were self-deceived; that benefi: cence did not consist in telling a poor

man, with whatever unction, to be warmed and filled, but in feeding and clothing him.[1] We feel how dangerous and delusive is this claim of invisible graces in the whole realm of the Christian life. "I have meekness and humility," says one, but his very gait, the poise of his head, the flash of his eye, pronounce him proud as Lucifer. "I have control of my temper," says another; but sullenness, irritability, sharp words to those that he knows will not retort, sadly belie the profession. Can we believe in the existence of graces that never fruit in action? Let the man that claims to be honest pay his debts and keep his accounts straight. Let the man that insists he has "truth in the inward parts" speak the truth, and stop bearing false witness against his neighbor, whether by words or by silence. Let the man that professes to love, show himself humble and patient and unselfish and cheerful. Without these results, pro-

[1] James, ii. 15–16.

fessions amount to nothing. Without these works, faith is dead. And so of Christian union. Show me thy unity in the midst of thy divisions, denominations, schisms, and I will show thee my unity, without divisions, in a Church unrent as the seamless robe of her divine Lord.

"Do you really look for that?" you will ask me; "do you really expect that sectarian strifes and denominational rivalries will cease, and that Christ's Church in the world will actually and visibly become one?" I certainly do, beloved. I am just as unpractical an idealist as all that. I do not look for it to-day nor to-morrow, but in God's good time, and so surely that it is my solemn duty, and yours, to believe in it unwaveringly and work for it untiringly. I expect it, because I find in the New Testament no provision for sectarianism, but the most solemn warning against it. I expect it because Christ prayed for it;

and the Father heareth him always.[1] I expect it, because he hath promised to bring in his other sheep until there shall be one flock as there is one shepherd.[2] I expect it, because all believers are members of Christ's body, and I cannot imagine that sacred body forever torn limb from limb.[3] I expect it, because only in oneness with Christ and with each other can any of us be made perfect[4] and reach the fullness of his stature.[5] I expect it, because only when this unity exists and is evident will the world believe,[6] and Jesus see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.[7]

"How long, dear Savior, O, how long,
Shall that bright hour delay?
Fly swifter round, ye wheels of time,
And bring the glorious day!"

[1] John, xi. 42.
[2] John, x. 16.
[3] Eph., v. 30.
[4] John, xvii. 23.
[5] Eph., iv. 13.
[6] John, xvii. 21 and 23.
[7] Isa., liii. 11.

Steps Toward Christian Union — Already Taken.

IV.

"Be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren."—Matt. xxiii. 8.

"The evils of denominationalism," I have been told since last Sunday, "are perfectly evident and very deplorable. The idea of Christian union is a very lofty and inspiring one. But it is totally impracticable. How can it ever be realized?"

Well, dear friends, I want to say emphatically that I have no patent plan for bringing the Churches of Christendom together. I make no claim to have discovered a panacea for denominationalism. These sermons are not a romance, that is to have some startling denouement, but a plain setting forth of facts and principles. Sectarianism is conceded to be a pres-

ent, wasteful, grievous evil; if we aecept it as inevitable, or acquiesce in it as something for which we are in no way responsible, it will surely never be cured. It was the people that were awake to the wickedness and peril of slavery, and that discussed it, not always very wisely, perhaps, but always earnestly, that paved the way for its overthrow. They did not know *how* it was to fall, but they believed it would fall. Not one of them could have predicted the actual method, or would have chosen it, had the choice been theirs. Mr. Lincoln himself could not have struck the final blow until God's providence indicated the hour. Nor could he have struck it successfully then unless there had been behind him a public sentiment educated by years of persistent discussion. So our duty is to open our eyes to the facts, to speak frankly of them to each other, and to ask ourselves what we can do to bring in a consummation that is as certain as God's promise can make the future.

It may help us to notice some methods by which Christian union can *not* be effected.

First of all, not by turning back the course of history and reversing the process that has led to our present denominationalism. State Churches are doomed. Violence to secure conformity is a thing of the past. Nobody now believes that a man's soul can be saved by torturing his body, nor that there is any value in a confession of faith extorted at the point of the sword. On the surface, and for a little while, this looks like unity, but soon we find that the fires of persecution have seamed the vase in every direction, and it is ready to fall to pieces at a touch. It appeared to be a happy day for the struggling and persecuted Church when Constantine converted, and made Christianity the religion of his great empire. But it was really the birthday of sectarianism. It was hailed as the dawn of freedom; we now see that it was the dawn of repression

that was sure, sooner or later, to break out into dissent. And from that day to this it has been made more and more evident that national force can not secure religious unity.

Nor can ecclesiastical force. No better machine for using this can be conceived than the Church of Rome, and no one will deny that it has improved its opportunities with vigor. But independence of thought and action are more and more asserting themselves in that communion. Let the Papacy attempt to control political movements in this country, and how quickly it gets the reply: "We take our religion from Rome, but not our politics." How many devout Romanists are outspoken for our public schools, and insist on sending their children to them, in spite of anathemas and even excommunication. The day when a Papal bull could bring soverings to their knees, array armies against each other, and make the bravest men tremble, has forever

passed away. However Christian union may be brought about, it must come in an atmosphere of civil and religious freedom.

In the second place, unity is not to come by any existing sect swallowing up all other sects. This is the vision that usually passes before our minds when the words, "Christian union," are pronounced in our hearing. We think of all the Churches becoming Presbyterian, and know of course that they never will. We ask ourselves whether we could become Methodists, or Episcopalians, or Lutherans, and get a prompt negative. So we dismiss Christian union as a mere chimera. And it would be, were there no other way than this merging; were some one sect to remain just what it is now, and all others to slough off their peculiarities in order to become homogenous with it. Any exclusive principle, like the papacy, apostolic succession, the necessity of a particular form of baptism, not only can never become

the basis of union, but forbids the possibility of union by unchristianizing all that do not hold it. Any branch of Christendom that claims to be "*the* Church of Christ," can not accomplish nor help toward union, no matter how widely it opens its arms to the rest of us. It must first concede the common and equal rights of all. And this Protestantism as a whole is now doing.

Nor, in the third place, can union be effected by any fiat, or coup d'etat. There are always men who have plans for doing everything, and doing it at once ; for avoiding the action of gravitation, annihilating space, and securing the results of time without waiting an hour. So there are those that have schemes of Christian union warranted to bring all the sects together immediately. We may well distrust all these. The disease is too deep-seated and of too long standing to be healed by a poultice. The evil is too great to yield to a proclamation. Legislation can not produce union. If all our one

hundred and forty sects were to unite in appointing representatives to an œcumenical conference, that should convene and discuss terms of union, nothing would come of it in the present state of Christian sentiment on the subject. For even though the leaders might agree, they could not control their followers. Christian union must come first in the desire and purpose of the people. It is coming that way; for the fact is, the laity are always in advance of the clergy in such matters. The latter act whenever they feel unmistakably the sentiment of the former. Whether in Church or state, only that legislation is useful that expresses the conviction of the people. Hence nothing immediate will probably come of the conference now holding between the Episcopal and Presbyterian Churches. In 1886 the House of Bishops proposed four terms of possible union — acceptance of the Scripture, of the œcumenical creeds, of the two sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Sup-

per, and of the historic episcopate. Our General Assembly promptly met the overture and appointed a committee of conference, which has been faithfully working at the problem proposed. This interchange of acquaintance and opinion is an excellent thing, and works toward union; but legislation under it is impossible, since the fourth term unordains our ministry, and shuts the pulpits of a great Church against us all. Dr. Dix, of Trinity Church, on Friday last, spoke on this question, and is reported to have unqualifiedly condemned exchange of pulpits; to have declared that Episcopalians will never recede in the least as to the episcopate; and to have pronounced the idea of Christian union a "craze," like that for fiat money, and unlimited coinage of silver.[1] The time is not ripe for an ACT of union until there is first the *spirit* of union; and that spirit has not come while we exalt a questionable historic continuity above the manifest seal of

[1] N. Y. Tribune, 21 Mch., 1891.

the Spirit of God. It will not be denied that this seal is upon the ministry of *all* our denominations; and its presence ought to silence debate. Then legislation would be hopeful; but meanwhile we must go on cultivating the spirit of concord that will at length issue in efficient acts.

It is most encouraging to notice that this spirit already largely pervades Christendom. We are not speaking of Christian union as though the need of it were a new discovery, nor as though the first steps toward it were yet to be taken. One has only to glance at current movements to realize how public sentiment on this subject has advanced in the last quarter or half century. Where is now the large city that has not some undenominational, or inter-denominational, movement for reaching the unchurched and the neglected? Such is the "city mission" in New York, which is doing noble work on both the East and West sides; building handsome and

substantial edifices ; and so commending itself to public confidence that it is receiving splendid donations — $65,000 from one gentleman a few days ago to erect a new church. Such is the Central Union Mission of this city, which goes where none of our churches are going, literally into the highways and hedges, to compel people to come in; in which all our denominations are co-operating; and which needs only a suitable edifice to insure its permanency and greatly enhance its usefulness.

Then there are general movements, in which sectarianism is never heard of, nor thought of. Such are the American Sabbath Union, for maintaining the legal and moral sanctions of the Lord's Day ; the American Sunday School Union, which is planting undenominational schools in destitute places, and which finds no difficulty in combining all faiths in active work for the children ; the American Tract Society, which circulates good reading

wherever it will be received and used ; the American Bible Society, which publishes the Word of God with money drawn from all sources, and distributes it without regard to race or sect ; only one leading Church feeling it necessary to have a distinctive translation of the Scriptures ; the Young Men's Christian Association, which in every city is gathering in the strangers to a home that is simply Christian, and surrounding them with influences that draw their inspiration from no partisan ambition or rivalry, but alone from the compassionate Redeemer.

On a still wider plane, stands such a movement as the Evangelical Alliance, which disregards national boundaries, and enlists Christians in such work as they can do on the common platform of simple discipleship. It has effectually plead for persecuted brethren in lands where religious freedom does not yet exist. It has aroused interest in the great problems of immigration, the liquor power, the slave

trade in Africa, the paganism of our cities, and other matters too large for any single denomination to handle. It is an illustration of the growing tendency, which it has no doubt helped on, to combine in all forms of humanitarian, philanthropic, and charitable effort. None of these organizations have *aimed* at Christian union; nad they done so, they would probably have accomplished less to promote it; but they have demonstrated how feasible it is, at least up to the point of active co-operation.

There are other things less frequently thought of, but that I believe to have been quite as efficient. For a good number of years the children of Christendom have been studying uniform lessons each Sabbath under the international plan. Each denomination has its own "helps," which give its peculiar views in exegesis and its distinctive applications of truth; but this does not obscure the great fact that on every continent, and in almost

every language of the world, to-day and every Sunday, millions of believers are poring over the same passage of the Word of God. That we can have such concerted action is a blessed thing. And it is a modern possibility. The opening of this century could not have witnessed it, nor perhaps any year of its first fifty. It demonstrates our essential oneness of thought that we all find food for profitable reflection in the same few verses of the Bible. And it gives us a sense of fellowship that neither sect nor nationity nor language can limit. The plan has been, and is, criticized, and probably there are defects in it, but they are far more than counterbalanced by its unifying power.

And the greatest movement of all toward union the last decade has witnessed. I mean the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor. It had no original purpose to promote union, nor has it any such avowed and conscious purpose now. It sprang

out of a revival in a single congregation, and the anxiety of the Pastor to find some way of training the young converts. He devised *this* way for his own uses, and without any idea that others would want to follow it. That was ten years and two months ago. Neighboring pastors in Portland heard how well the plan was working and inquired about it. The editor of a religious paper asked for information, and Dr. Clark wrote a brief description under the modest title, "How one Church cares for its Young People." It was instantly felt that here was something to meet a need long pressing on the hearts of pastors and thoughtful Christians; a practical training-place midway between the Sunday School and the Church; a method of filling up the awful chasm that had long been swallowing such multitudes of the young. Here they could find scope for their activity and develop the talents that were rusting in idleness. Within the decade "the little

one has become a thousand" — many thousands. It has overleaped sectarian bounderies and has a place now in the thirty leading denominations. It has traversed land and sea, and exists to-day in thirty-seven different countries. There are 14,500 societies reported, with 870,000 members, and they are increasing at the rate of more than one hundred per week.[1]

What do such remarkable facts mean? They mean that a generation of young Christians is coming on, trained to speak and work and give for Christ as no preceding generation has ever been; a generation that will know its power for Christian service, and never be content except when using it. But more, they mean a generation of Christians trained to respect each other's piety. "Christian endeavor" conserves most carefully denominational faiths and methods. It asks allegiance to none but Christ and the Church. It wants for itself not a dollar, not a penny.

[1] In September, 1891, there are over one million members.

But its members come to know each other. They meet in local unions, and in state and national conventions. They sing the same hymns; are stirred by the same addresses; are quickened by the same prayers. They have practical demonstration of the fact that Christian union is possible, and that, thus far, it exists. And thenceforward no power can make them bitter sectarians, as some of their ancestors, perhaps even their own fathers, have been. The sympathies once broadened, cannot again be narrowed. The spirit once set free, thereafter abjures bonds. "Christian endeavor" is the prophecy of Christian union.

It is sad to blur so bright a picture. Could we pause right here, we might feel that under these various influences, the spirit of sectarianism had well-nigh disappeared. But alas! in our own Church, which stands first in the number of its Christian Endeavor Societies, there are some that have taken alarm at this very tendency

toward union, and have announced their determination to ask the next General Assembly to denominationalize the movement; to call on our young people to withdraw from Christian Endeavor, and form Westminster Leagues. I do not believe that so reactionary a movement can succeed, but that it should be attempted proves how mighty is still the sectarian spirit in what is undoubtedly the most liberal denomination of Christendom.[1]

In calling your attention to these steps already taken toward Christian union, I have confined our view chiefly to our own country. But similar good omens may be found everywhere. Concerted and co-operative action marks this age in every land. Though various sects have done the evangelizing, there is now "The Church of Christ in Japan." Two years ago the different Presbyterian churches working together in Brazil spontaneously

[1] This attempt was overwhelmingly voted down at Detroit in May, 1891.

and heartily came together. And on every Foreign Mission field, where the evils of sectarianism are especially felt, the tendency to union is especially potent.

Still, I earnestly believe that the problem of Christian union is to be worked out chiefly in this land. Here we have complete civil and religious freedom. Here we are relieved from all the pecuniary, social, and political complications of State churches. Here the impulses that God's Spirit puts into the hearts of his people may develop unhindered by fear and unperverted by favor. The best that religion can do for man, it has the best possible chance to do in America. What if this is to be the land of United Churches as well as of United States? What, if to the gifts of abundant soil, free education, liberty and peace for man, we are to add the greater — the greatest — gift of religious unity? What if God has reserved it for us to solve the unsolvable problem of the centuries? I be-

lieve it is so, despite our one hundred and forty sects. We have "reached a point where we must choose between disintegration and reunion." Who doubts what the choice will be? What it already is? This is the legend for Christian America: "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren!"

Steps Toward Christian Union—Next to Be Taken.

V.

"Till we all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."—Eph., iv .13.

"No sentimental talk," said Bismarck, "can unify Germany, but blood and iron." Eliminating the thought of war, we may apply this remark to the unification of Christendom. It cannot come through the utterance of any sentiments, however fraternal, nor through mere idle good wishes and benedictions. There must be mutual concessions, and self-sacrifices that cost something. But certainly this is no argument against Christian union for those that are voluntary followers of the Master who made self-denial the crucial test of discipleship.[1] What if we must submit to the humiliation of

[1] Matt., xvi. 24.

revising long-cherished opinions? of conceding piety to those that we have been wont to despise? of foregoing the gratification of some of our tastes in worship? even of surrendering some unquestionable rights and liberties? Is not all this in the spirit of Him who for our sakes "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross?"[1] Paul assures us that the path we are seeking leads into, and through, unity of faith in Christ and knowledge of him. There is one Lord; and there is one faith, one hope, one baptism; i. e., one Christian experience; just because there is one only Savior. But more; there is one *body* even as there is one spirit that animates it, and one calling that brings all the scattered members of the body together to the head.[2] "Above the strife of the schools rises in serene and

[1] Phil., ii, 7-8.

[2] Eph., iv. 1-6.

untroubled majesty the radiant form of the Son of God, the embodiment and reconciliation of divinity and humanity."[1] "In Christ," said Pascal, "all contradictions are solved."

What steps can we take, then, to bring ourselves, and all Christians, nearer to Christ and so nearer to each other?

First of all, *we need to know each other better.* Ignorance means prejudice. Prejudice means suspicion. Suspicion means discord and division. North and South in this country would not have gone to war had they known each other better. True, knowledge alone would not have removed the ultimate cause of war, which was slavery. But had each section understood the other's sincerity, convictions, courage, determination; some method of cure would have been sought and found less terrible than the sword.

And to-day the thing most immediately needed to perpetuate and assure

[1] H. B. Smith, "Faith and Philosophy," p. 263.

our national unity is better mutual acquaintance. Groundless prejudices still exist between the North and the South. The East regards the West as rude and uncultured. The West looks upon the East as slow and unenterprising. Politicians of the baser sort are always ready to see their own promotion in fostering sectional pride and ambition, and do not hesitate to feed sectional prejudice. That the peril is real no thoughtful man doubts. And the cure is knowledge; the sort of knowledge that comes not from hearsay, nor reading, but from actual acquaintance with people. The Post-Office is a unifying agent, for the interchange of letters vastly promotes good understanding. The railroad is such an agent, for travel and observation give genuine knowledge. The people that have seen most of our country are the people that most highly respect the enterprise, intelligence, and patriotism of every section of it.

So also as between nations. In the

savage state the words "stranger" and "enemy" are synonyms. Each race calls all other races "barbarians." Each country studs its frontiers with arsenals and forts. Why is it otherwise when civilization comes? Why is arbitration taking the place of war? Simply because the nations have come to know each other better; and knowledge has broken down provincialism and insular prejudice. We have found that other people as well as ourselves want to live in peace; that they have no wish to fly at our throats; that they are as civilized as we are, and in some things, perhaps, more so. Intercommunication has brought this about; steamships and ocean cables are agents of peace. We sometimes fear that foreign travel will diminish patriotism; not so; but it will increase the cosmopolitan spirit, and give us a juster appreciation of mankind.

So also as regards denominationalism. We need more knowledge of

each other. Most of us come up to manhood and womanhood without ever looking over the wall that bounds our sect. How common it is to hear middle-aged people say: "I have never been inside a Methodist Church, a Baptist, an Episcopal, a Presbyterian. What do they do in those Churches, anyway? I suppose I would not feel at all at home." And as for Romish Churches, most Protestants feel that to go inside them is next to abjuring Christ altogether. But acquaintance soon teaches us that in every sect there are those that fear God and work righteousness;[1] that are as loyal to Christ as we are, and as earnest in seeking the salvation of men. Now we cannot cherish suspicion and enmity toward such fellow-disciples when we know what they are. We may not agree with them in all particulars; we may even think them seriously mistaken in many directions; but while they hold the head,[2] even

[1] Acts, x. 35. [2] Col., ii. 19.

Christ,[1] we will not think of impugning their Christian character. Personal acquaintance is the only thing that can liberalize us in this matter. We must know the people in the various denominations, not merely the creeds they profess. They may be, and often are, better than their creeds. If we find that they have genuine, simple, aggressive piety, we cannot help holding them as our brethren.

Secondly, *we must subordinate taste to principle, wherever they clash.* The question of what place taste has in personal religion is a very important one, but time will not permit us to discuss it now. That it has a large place in the matter of Christian union cannot be doubted. We believe, for example, that our Methodist friends are excellent Christians. We fully recognize their piety and zeal and evangelizing energy. But some things in their worship are not to our taste. We do not like their loudness in preaching

[1] Eph., iv. 15.

and prayer, nor their audible responses. Well, in a city like this, where we may have free choice of a place to worship, we need not subject ourselves to these unpleasant things. But suppose we should remove to a small village, where the only Church is Methodist, and where it is meeting every need. May our taste in worship dominate us then? Shall we drop our religion altogether because of the Methodist "amens"? Shall we insist on having a Presbyterian Church there, at denominational expense, thus dividing and weakening what already exists? Or, shall we subordinate our taste to higher matters; throw ourselves into the existing organization and work, and seek first the general good of the cause we love?

So if the Church we find were Episcopalian. Our taste does not run toward liturgical worship. We do not like forms of prayer, and find it difficult to follow them. We prefer greater simplicity and freedom. But the Gos-

pel is faithfully preached, the sacraments devoutly administered, and all the means of grace ready to our use. Shall we refuse them on the score of taste; or relegate taste to the background, and accept them?

So if the case were reversed, and Methodists and Episcopalians were to come to a village where only the Presbyterian Church exists. Shall the former reject our worship because it is too cold, and the latter because it is too simple, and insist on having their own or none? Such insistence is the cause of much of that enormous and wicked waste of money and men that constantly cripples our aggressive movements.

The same principle applies to the attitude of all our Churches toward such evangelizing agencies as our Central Union Mission, and the Salvation Army. They have many methods that are not to our taste, and that would not be appropriate in this Church, or in nine-tenths of our

Churches. But this Church is not touching the people among whom they labor. This is no reproach to us; it is simply defining our limitations. We ask them to concede that we know best what methods are suited to our constituency; let us concede that they know best how to do their work. If the city missions of all kinds have no right to thrust their ways upon us, nor to read us out of the Christian fellowship because we decline to adopt them, no more have we a right to treat them in such fashion. It is mostly a matter of taste. We do not like to take our preaching from a "Gospel wagon," nor be summoned to it by drums and tambourines. Very well, we need not. But there are multitudes that do not share our objections, and that will never hear of Christ in any other way. Shall we criticize those that are carrying them the Gospel, and whose work has the seal of God upon it, in that it makes for temperance, chastity, cleanliness,

righteousness? For my part, I dare not. I might not be able to work thus; probably would not for lack of sufficient self-denying consecration; but I recognize the divine approval, and devoutly say: "God bless the workers, and speed the work!"

Thirdly, *we must be willing to see our own denomination decrease if thus the kingdom of Christ at large may increase.* Usually this would not be a method of growth. In most cases, the addition of a Presbyterian Church to our roll means a positive accession of strength to the Christian cause. But not always. In the case just supposed, where some evangelical Church is planted in a village, or in a section of a city, and is working the field, religion is *hindered* by some one else stepping in. The moral force of two weak Churches is greatly less than of one strong Church. Weakness is a premium on dissensions, rivalries, unworthy methods of gaining members and money. We must resist the

temptations of ambition to make a brilliant showing in our annual reports, where so doing will actually retard the Redeemer's kingdom.

Not only must we sometimes decline to organize new churches, we must be ready to dissolve old ones. This brings into view what is often said to be the greatest practical obstacle to Christian union, viz.: the question of property. No doubt difficult problems here emerge. Vested interests are very large. Bequests have come down with stringent limitations. Vast sums are held upon condition that they shall be used to maintain this or that denomination, this or that type of theology. I am not competent to solve all these problems. Nor are they imminent. When they become so, I have no doubt solutions will be at hand. And meanwhile we may do something in this direction by applying the well-known mercantile principle that it is sometimes as incumbent to make a loss as at other times to make a profit.

Here is a stranded church. Population has moved on, and left it. The community no longer needs it. Common sense says, "Dissolve it." But the land on which the edifice stands was given, and the deed contains a reversionary clause. To dissolve the Church is to let the land return to the heirs of the donor. Now this is a question in economics. Shall we spend money and a man to keep up a needless Church for the sake of holding a constantly depreciating property? "The street" would pronounce that poor business, would call it "sending good money after bad." We will say the same when we subordinate our denominational ambition to our calm judgment.

You say "the carrying out of this principle would be union on a very small scale, and only here and there." True; but remember I am not trying to give any patent plan of immediate general union, but only to indicate what steps we may now take in the

right direction. And this is one of them. Repress our sectarian spirit sufficiently to cheerfully see our roll sum up one less, whenever so doing will advance the Kingdom of Christ.

In the fourth place, *we must reduce and simplify the terms of communion.* It is true that we admit members to our Churches simply upon a credible confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. If they evince consciousness of sin and penitence for it; trust in the Savior and a purpose to openly follow him; we welcome them to his table. Thus far we are in the line of Apostolic practice. But as between our denominations, "terms of communion have been adopted so narrow and local that they foster only dissension."[1] Our symbols are so minute and metaphysical, as related to the Scripture, so largely inferential, and that from single, isolated texts, rather than from the whole trend of the Word of God; so provincial and temporary, instead

[1] Smith, ut sup. p. 267.

of universal and historic, that they make any broad and generous fellowship almost impossible. Our Presbyterian Church is as liberal in spirit as any Church in Christendom, but we could not ordain Luther, or Wesley, or Bunyan, or Archbishop Leighton to our ministry, or even to our ruling eldership, or our diaconate. Is not this a reductio ad absurdum? We reverence those men as eminently Godly, loyal to Christ, useful to the world. One of them is the father of all our Protestantism. Another has rekindled the fire of devotion amid the ashes of millions of altars. Do we doubt that God accepted them? Yet we exclude them from all our sacred offices, not on the ground of unworthiness, or unfitness; not because we do not all hold in common the *great* truths of Christianity, but because we differ in some minor and inferential matters that we have exalted into practical tests of loyalty to Christ and qualifications for his service.

The common plea in extenuation of this is that we must conserve the truth, and that each denomination is doing this for some phase or phases characteristically its own. But all that may be done, while at the same time we liberalize our terms of communion. The revision of our confession of faith is a marked step in this direction. Just so far as the revision shall be thorough will it reduce the number of bristling points of antagonism that we now present to other Churches. The movement for a concensus creed of the Reformed Churches is very hopeful. Let us state the things in which we all agree, and stand upon them; subordinating the things in which we differ; holding them, if need be, as matters of private opinion or belief, but not fencing ourselves in with them from the rest of God's people. This, you see, is a return toward "the simplicity that is in Christ."[1] For one, I should like to see it go on till we take the

[1] II Cor., xi. 3.

Apostles' Creed as our common symbol. This is accepted to-day, and has always been accepted, by all Christendom, Greek, Roman and Protestant. Yet how many of our Churches make little or no use of it! In how few Presbyterian congregations is it ever recited! In how few Sunday Schools taught! What a stride we could take toward Christian union if we should adopt this historic, universal confession of faith as a sufficient term of communion.

And in the same direction, why not exalt the names that bind us together above the names that mark and perpetuate our divisions? Augustine, for example, the most influential theologian between Paul and Luther, belongs to Romanism and Protestantism alike. But Paul belongs to all Christendom. If we must have human names, these are unifying; while lesser ones, like Luther's, Calvin's, Wesley's, are divisive. But we do not forget that Paul would not have his name used in his

day, and for the very reason that it meant schism. The one all-embracing name is Jesus Christ.

This reduction and simplifying of the terms of communion would work two ways toward union ; it would draw existing sets together, and prevent the forming of new sets. Wesley had no wish or design to leave the Church of England. He held to his dying day all the material truth it holds. The Establishment crowded him out by compelling him to choose between conformity in non-essentials and good conscience toward God. We have seen a similar thing in our day ; the Reformed Episcopal Church, a wholly needless sect, arising because the rubric is so rigid that the Bishop declared in substance : "You must *say* 'regenerate' in baptism whether you believe it or not." So all our Protestant Churches have crowded out godly, consecrated men who believe all that is essential to salvation, but cannot assent to some one's conjectures and

metaphysical hair-splittings. But for this, we would not have reached the unenviable one hundred and forty denominations in the United States. More standing-room within the Churches is what we need; room enough for all devoted men and women that hold the head, even Christ; that the Apostolic Church would have welcomed; that the Master would receive, who said to John, when he forbade a man to use Christ's name because he did not belong to the little band, "Forbid him not; for he that is not against us is for us."[1]

And, finally, *we must have more piety*. The thing that would do most for Christian Union would be a wide-spread revival of religion, resulting in more simple, ardent, world-renouncing, soul-absorbing devotion to Christ, and to his one work of saving men. When a genuine revival comes to a town or city, how naturally all Christians work together! How party

[1] Mark, ix. 40.

issues sink out of sight and party names are forgotten! Only when the fire has died down, and our ardor for saving men has cooled, do we begin to think about getting them into "our Church." We had no heart for that while we were busy getting them into the Kingdom of Christ. May not the revival spirit become universal and perpetual? That would mean Christian union not dreamed about, and argued for, and prayed for, but accomplished. For this union must be chemical, not mechanical; a fusion by heat, not a compression by authority; a spirit working from within, not a bond applied from without. Who doubts that Christ's ideal is such a Church; all one; prejudices broken down; jealousies abolished; divisions healed; the common language of love spoken; the common work of saving men done; the name that is above every name alone exalted? Who doubts that if we were such in all holy conversation and godliness, we would be not only

looking for, but hastening, the coming of the day of God?[1] Who doubts that when we, and all believers, are such, the Master will "come quickly," having his reward with him, to "give every man according as his work shall be?"[2] "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"[3]

[1] 2 Pet., iii. 11 and 12.

[2] Rev., xxii. 12.

[3] v. 20.